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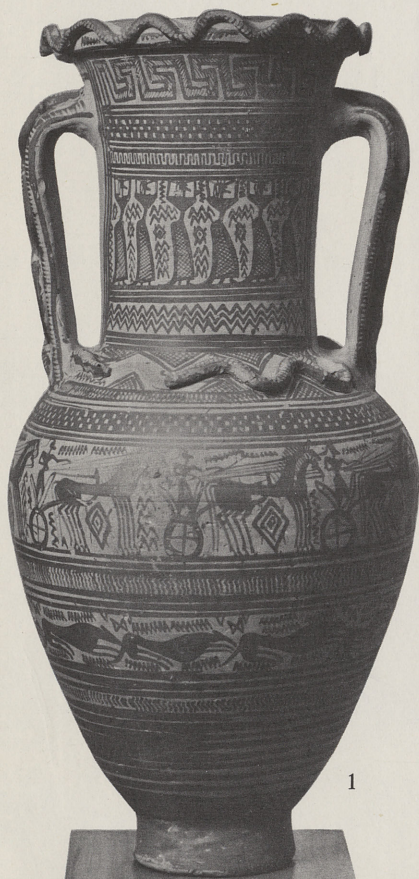
# *Classical Art*

THE  
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PLATE 1. Dipylon Vase, Greek  
Athenian, 8th century B.C.  
Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 2. Kouros, Greek  
2nd quarter of 6th century B.C.  
Gift of Hanna Fund

PLATE 3. Head of a Sphinx, Greek  
From Soluntum, Sicily, 6th century B.C.  
John Huntington Collection

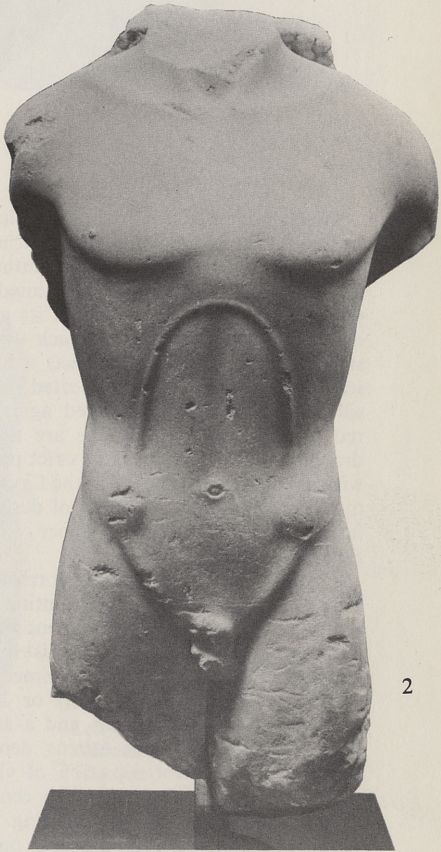


THE DEVELOPMENT of classical Greek culture is one of the most brilliant chapters in the history of the ancient world. The primitive tribes that settled the rugged peninsula of Greece at the beginning of the first millennium B.C. were late comers in comparison to the already ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. They were also not the first to inhabit this area, but had been preceded by the great Mycenaean culture on the mainland, and that of the Minoans on the island of Crete. Strangely, almost nothing of the former civilizations survived the invasions except vague memories in the form of myths. At the beginning of the "dark ages" that followed the new migrations of peoples to the peninsula and the ensuing collapse of the older culture, art turned to a vigorous barbarism that reflected the tribal society from which it came. Emerging from the chaos of this period, the earliest contribution to the development of Greek art was the "geometric style" of pottery decoration, exemplified by the Museum's dipylon vase made around 800 B.C. and used as a grave monument (plate 1). It consists of geometric patterns and rigid stick-like representations of human beings and animals. The central band of decoration shows a funeral procession of chariots, and in the upper register there are mourning women with arms raised. In this style there is a sense of formal relationship between form and ornament that is to reappear in the later art of Greece.

The rise of Greek art parallels the development of this culture in the world, with its unique way of life. Throughout the span of ancient oriental empires, art had usually served the rulers or the gods, adhering to sacred rules passed down through generations. Egyptian art is an example of this extremely conservative style. Although the Greek artist studied the old rules and followed them to some

extent, he was not content with copying a set formula. He began to experiment, trying to imitate the actual forms of nature as he saw them. The Museum's kouros figure (plate 2) made in the sixth century B.C. to celebrate the prowess of a young athlete, is testimony of the early Greek sculptors' attempts to transform the inanimate idol into a human image, capable of life and movement. Although stiffness is still evident and the anatomy of the torso is not yet fully understood, there is a startling freshness and vigor in the youthful figure that embodies artistically the dynamic young Greek culture which had given the individual artist such unprecedented freedom of action. Another example of this early or "archaic" period in Greek art is a marble sphinx head (plate 3). Despite the fact that the sphinx form originally came from Egypt, the head of the Greek example is more softened and humanized than its prototype. The hair remains stylized but the facial characteristics show a tentative step toward naturalism. The bulging eyes, prominent cheeks, and strange "archaic smile" make the sculptured heads of this period distinct.

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Greek painters followed Greek sculptors in a new realization of their art. Unfortunately, almost none of this painting is left today. The small scenes painted on Greek vases give only a hint of its grandeur. A sixth century B.C. "black figured style" amphora (plate 4) depicts a battle scene with delicately delineated black silhouettes of warriors played against a red background. The figures are tightly drawn with stylized heads in strict profile with a front view of the eye in the Egyptian manner, although the vitality of design is far removed from the static repose of most Egyptian painting.

About 500 B.C. great transformations were taking place in Greek painting and sculpture. A century of experiment was at last bearing fruit as the Greek artist finally attained full mastery of his experiments in artistic vision. The wine cup or kylix (plate 5) showing Dionysus and a satyr, made around 480 B.C. in Athens, demonstrates a daring new depiction of visual reality. It is typical of the fifth century "red figured style" of vase painting. The prancing satyr, when compared to one of

the warriors from the sixth century amphora, is far more convincing visually in his pose and movement. The angle of vision is taken into account so that the torso of the satyr appears as a solid form, not a flat silhouette. This is opposed to the old formula of front view torso and side view legs seen in the "black figured" vase. In another example of fifth century "red figured" style (plate 6, cover) a warrior's shield is seen leaning against a stool, as it would appear from the side. This does not mean, however, that the painting of the fifth century B.C. is literally realistic. There is still a crisp, angular, two-dimensional movement, like the studied gestures of a dance, and a complex pattern of linear detail which serve to emphasize the decorative silhouettes which the Greek painters loved (plate 7).

During the fifth century B.C. the city states of Greece reached their maturity. The Persians had been defeated after they had destroyed the Acropolis at Athens, and under the leadership of Pericles a new architectural and sculptural style evolved to replace that which had been destroyed

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PLATE 4. Amphora  
Greek, 6th century B.C.  
Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 5. Kylix  
By Douris, Greek  
Attic, 480 B.C.  
Hinman B. Hurlbut Collection

PLATE 6 (see cover).  
Lekythos, Greek  
Athenian, 5th century B.C.  
The Charles W. Harkness  
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PLATE 7. Kylix  
(Underside of Plate 5)



on the Athenian citadel. Philosophy and science flourished during this age as democracy achieved a new affirmation of the dignity of man. The Greek admiration for intellectual attainment was equaled by a similar love of bodily perfection. Statues of victorious youths from the popular athletic contests were placed near temples and dedicated to the gods. Little is left of the magnificent sculpture of this age except for the remains of the sculptured decoration of the temple of the goddess Athena, the Parthenon, conceived by the fifth century sculptor Phidias. A bronze athlete in the Museum (plate 8) is, however, one of the few real documents of sculptural style left to us from this age. This small, but monumentally conceived figure shows a clear restrained balance of well articulated anatomy brought together in a perfect harmony of complete repose. It is an integrated and intellectually regulated ideal of the human body. The athlete stands poised, in a relaxed stance, yet fully capable of movement.

By the end of the fifth century the Greek artist had gained complete control of his new technique, and became interested in subtle nuances of grace and beauty with which he could endow his creations. Praxitiles, the greatest sculptor of the fourth century, typifies this new sophistication in his Hermes with the Young Dionysus, now at the Olympia Museum in Greece. As the severe Doric order of the Parthenon architecture echoes the solid strength of the fifth century ideal, the suave slender Ionic column and architecture express the changes in sculptural style that followed. In the small bronze statue of an athlete from the third century (plate 9) there is an emphasis on delicacy and swaying fluid motion, which is indicated also in the softer, more fleshlike quality of the surface and subtle transitions in the musculature. Beauty instead of solemn grandeur became the dominant aspiration of artists during this era. A similar development can be seen in vase painting. Linear contours became more supple and less angular while the techniques of foreshortening and visual perspective are exploited to bring about a closer approximation of spatial reality (plate 10).

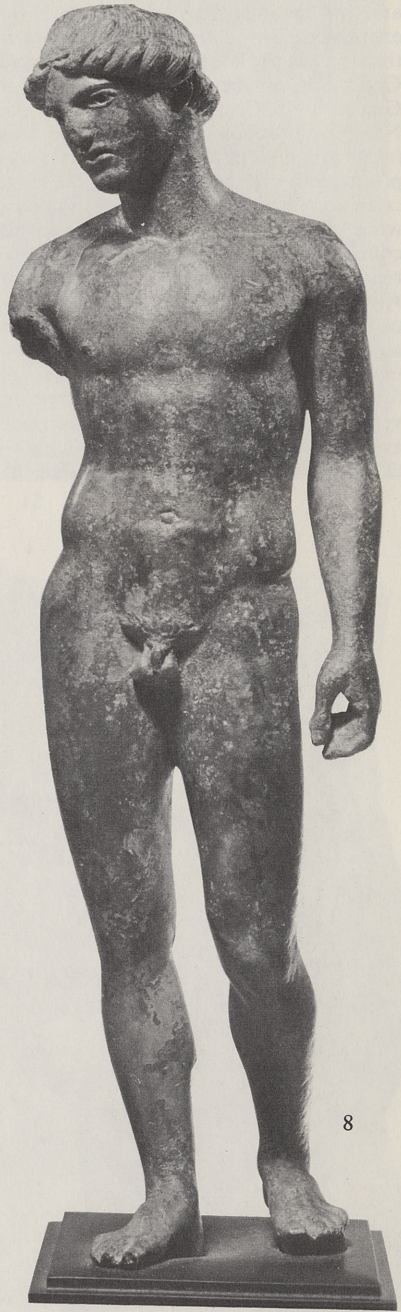
PLATE 8. Athlete, Bronze, Greek  
Attic or Argive. 3rd quarter of 5th century B.C.  
Gift of Hanna Fund

PLATE 9. Athlete, Bronze, Greek  
3rd century B.C.  
Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 10. White Lekythos, Greek  
4th century B.C. John Huntington Collection



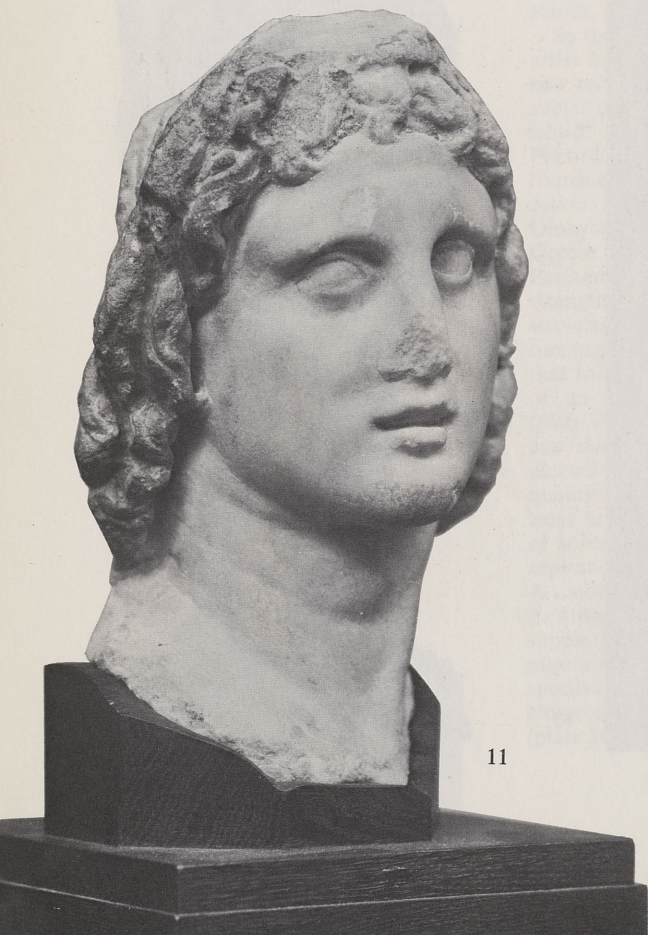
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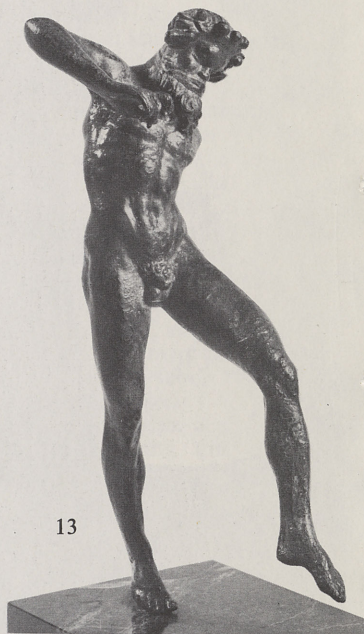
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The next phase in the evolution of Greek art was the discovery of the power of expression. The conquests of Alexander the Great in the late fourth century spread Greek art far beyond the confines of Greece itself. Cosmopolitan cities in the Near East produced a new class of patrons for its art and architecture. Alexander was portrayed by his court sculptor, the most celebrated artist of his time, Lysippus, whose faithfulness to nature amazed his contemporaries. Only copies of these representations remain. The head of Alexander in the Museum (plate 11) shows us his style. The face, with its parted lips and deep sunken eyes, represents an inspired hero and expresses the personal force of the great leader. It is idealized yet very different from the perfect serenity and self-containment seen in the unemotional faces of the fifth century. The art

of the period after Alexander, known as the Hellenistic age, became intermingled with oriental splendor. The elaborate Corinthian order in architecture on a vast scale appeared in Alexandrian cities, although often diluted by local traditions. The beautifully expressive head of a Gaul (plate 12) shows one of the barbarians that invaded the Mediterranean world at this time. He represents one of the diverse ethnic groups of this sophisticated culture that delighted in dramatic action, violence, and the tragic and picturesque elements of artistic expression. The Hellenistic bronze satyr (plate 13) reveals the sculptor's virtuosity in depicting the human body in even the most complex poses. The relief panel (plate 14) shows the excited movement and twisted billows of drapery enhancing the drama of the battle scene.



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PLATE 11. Alexander the Great, Marble  
Greek, Alexandrian, Hellenistic  
3rd century B.C.

Gift of Mrs. Ralph King

PLATE 12. Head of a Barbarian, Marble  
Greek, 3rd century B.C.

Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 13. Satyr, Piping and Dancing  
Bronze, Greek, Hellenistic  
3rd-2nd century B.C.

Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 14. Tombstone  
Relief of Hermes and Ares. Limestone  
Said to have come from  
Tarentum, Magna Graecia  
3rd century B.C.

Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund



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Greek sculpture and painting evolved over five centuries from an experimental "archaic" style to a complete mastery of visual nature. It then developed from an austere idealization of the human form to the extravagant drama, tensions, and illusionism of the latest phases of Hellenistic art. All these were bequeathed to the Roman world where they were preserved for many centuries and transmitted not only throughout the empire but beyond it. Nevertheless, this tradition of art was by no means the first in the Italian peninsula. The Etruscans who ruled most of Italy before the Roman ascendancy evolved a style parallel to that of Greek art. The

delightfully rhythmic silhouette of the Etruscan dancing Maenad (plate 15) suggests linear forms found in sixth century B.C. "black figured" Greek vases, but has an exuberance that is purely native. Another example of this sculptural tradition in miniature occurs on an Etruscan bronze vessel in the form of a handle (plate 16) fashioned as a representation of the winged deities of Sleep and Death carrying the body of a fallen warrior. In Etruscan art the figures are more animated and human than those of early Greek art. There is an earthiness and gaiety about them which is less ideal and divine than their counterparts in Greece.





PLATE 15.  
Dancing Maenad  
From a Candelabrum  
Bronze  
Etruscan, Late 6th-  
Early 5th century B.C.  
Purchase from  
the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 16.  
Handle  
Bronze, Etruscan  
4th century B.C.  
Purchase from  
the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 17. Athlete, Italian Marble. Roman copy of Greek original perhaps by Myron, 1st century B.C.-1st century A.D.  
John Huntington Collection

PLATE 18. Portrait Statue of a Statesman, Marble  
Roman, 1st century A.D. Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund



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The art of Rome continued the established Greek classical tradition. Often great works by Greek sculptors were copied by later Greek and Roman artisans. It is fortunate that these copies were made, since most of the original works have now been lost or destroyed. The copyists' works tend to appear lifeless and studied when we compare them to the few originals that time has spared, but they are often of great historical value as a link to the styles of great Greek sculptors. The large marble statue of an athlete (plate 17) is a copy of a lost Greek work of the fifth century B.C., which was made in the Roman era. We know that the original must have been executed in bronze since the supports used in the marble copy would have been unnecessary in the bronze original. In direct contrast to the Greek type of ideal athlete figure is a large statue of a Roman statesman (plate 18) which is actually a composite figure made up of the body of one statue and the head of a Roman emperor from another. The fact that the head did not originally belong to the statue, however, does not detract from its power, since most figures of Roman leaders belong to a set type in which many parts are interchangeable. Unlike the impersonal ideal concept of the athlete, the Roman work shows a distinct individual. It is among the first in the great western tradition of monuments to leaders of men, which to this day grace parks and squares in every city.

Roman civilization rose to supreme power in the ancient world through its practical, worldly abilities in political organization, law, military strategy, and engineering genius. Its main contribution to classical art derives from its development of incisive realism in portraiture, of which three examples will be discussed. The first is a bronze head of a man which

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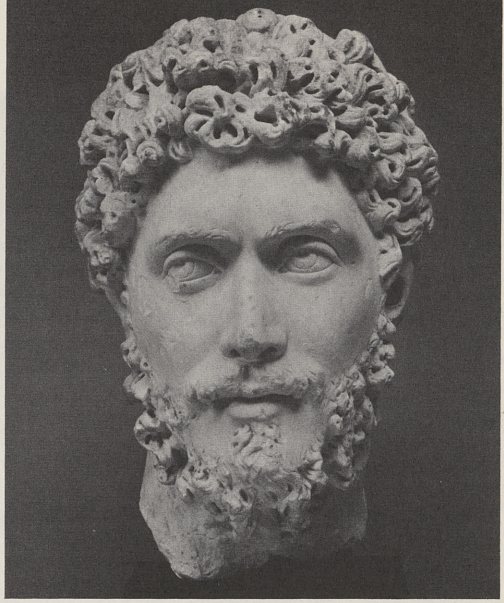


PLATE 19 (see back cover).  
Portrait of a Man, Bronze  
Roman, 1st century A.D.  
John Huntington Collection

PLATE 20.  
*The Co-Emperor Lucius Verus*  
130-169 A.D. Marble  
Roman, from Alexandria  
170-180 A.D.  
Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 21.  
Portrait Bust of a Boy  
Marble, Roman  
Mid-3rd century A.D.  
Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

PLATE 22. Roman Sarcophagus  
*The Vengeance of Orestes*  
Marble, 2nd century A.D.  
John Huntington Collection



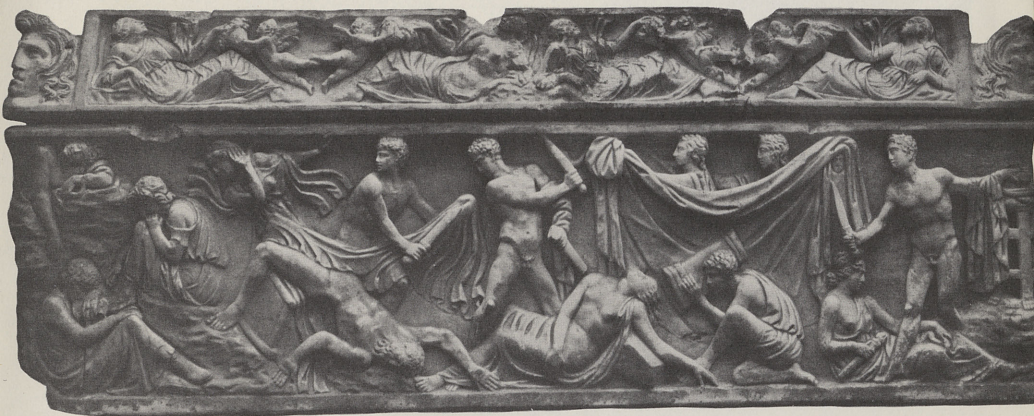
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may have been colored to increase its realistic qualities, and has empty eye sockets for inlaid enamel eyes (plate 19). The second is a later and far more elaborate head of the co-emperor Lucius Verus (plate 20) which shows the second century A.D. developments of increased illusionism in portraiture. The use of a drill in hair and beard, the incised line of the iris of the eye, and the pupil formed of two small holes within the iris, indicate increased interest in subtle differentiations of texture and effects of light and shade, which took the place of applied coloring. The third example is a portrait bust of a small boy made in the mid-third century A.D. (plate 21). Its late dating is determined by the inclusion of the chest and upper arms in the work, a characteristic of portrait sculpture in this era. The plastic treatment of the eye is also evident, but the method of rendering the hair as a close fitting cap covered with incised lines was popular in the third century. There is a childlike softness in the face, rendered with masterly skill, yet the features retain the stamp of an individual Roman boy.

A marble sarcophagus (plate 22) depicting the vengeance of Orestes comes

from Rome in the second century A.D. The sculptured high-relief scenes on the front show various parts of this Greek myth. On the lid are four reclining women representing the seasons, and on either end are guardian griffins. The relief takes the form of a narrative, another important sculptural form of Imperial Rome, but the relatively restrained style marks it as a second-century production, made during a period of return to earlier Greek concepts in Roman art.

After the rule of Rome had ended and Christian civilization sprang up throughout the fragmented empire, classical art still influenced European culture both directly and indirectly. Traces of classical inheritance may be seen in the Middle Ages, even before the Italian Renaissance effected a conscious return to ancient standards and artistic vocabulary. Since that time the art and culture of the classical world has been admired and imitated in the West. Even today there are many public buildings in our own city that use elements of classical architecture and decoration. All this is testimony to the importance of this great age in the civilization of Western man.

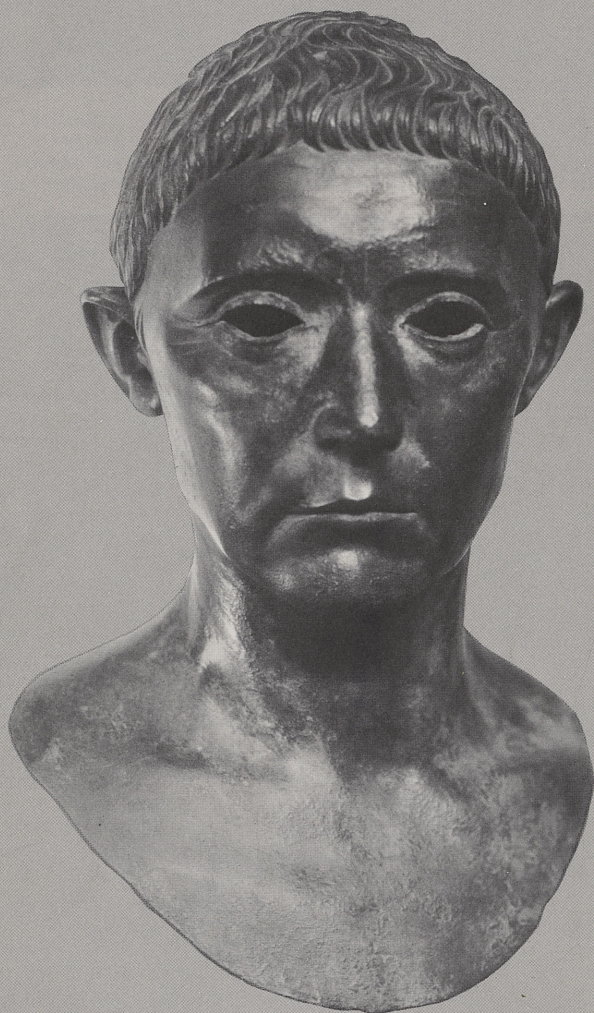


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